

I-80 HEADED WEST

comin down out of the sierras
everything that bright new
growth after a rain green
my old lady sittin beside me
in the cab beer between
my legs a joint passin around
merle haggard singin white line fever
on the KRAK country corral
out the windshield everything
lookin so good
so god damned good

NOTE TO A PAINTER

i found it interesting
that you labeled my comments
about your woman pointless
i don't think i've ever heard that word
applied to anything
other than modern art & writing

& while perhaps you may be stuck
with your paintings & your woman
i am not
with my poems or my woman
even though i too have often found
most women & most things
pointless
dull
the knife never sharp enough
to pierce the skin & share a slice

but there are times when the cut
is so quick so deep
that a bold crimson swatch
splashes across the page
& the taste is incredibly sweet
but those times are hard to see
you must move quickly
to catch them
you have to listen
even when you know
there's no point
to filling in the canvas

which is what i suppose
john thomas was getting at
when he pointed out that
the difference between painters & poets
is that the latter
do not have to
keep their hands still

ATASCADERO

comfortable new tract
he doesn't plant dichondra
or gravel but grapes chilis
everything from artichokes to zucchini
thrive he makes his own
beer grows the largest
begonias i've ever seen
seems honestly happy
riding his bike to work
dispensing medication at
the state mental hospital

THE FATHER POEM

i didn't know him very well
he & my mother split up
when i was 8 or 9 or 10
and for the next few years
i only saw him
when he came to town
once a year at the capri motel
next to the LA airport
then i moved out
& even that stopped

i was 22 or 23
when i next heard from him
a letter hastily written
on half a sheet of paper
dear kirk it said
i guess i haven't been much
of a father
& perhaps i've developed
a jaundiced attitude toward things
but i've tried to do
what i thought
i had to do